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ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

SEMINAR ON THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

ADDRESS BY

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“Multilateral Cooperation for Security- The example of the Chemical
Weapons Convention”

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H.E Ambassador Gul Haneef, Dr. Irfan Shami, Air Commodore Khalid Banuri, Brigadier Muhammad Khurshid Khan, Dr. Jaspal, Dr. Maria Sultan,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this Seminar organized by the Institute of Strategic Studies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA) National Defence University, South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI) and Departments of International Relations (IR) and Defence and Strategic Studies (DSS) Quaid-e-Azam University. I thank all the co-organisers for their effort and their support for the Chemical Weapons Convention which this event signifies.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Pakistan for its kind invitation to me to visit Islamabad. Pakistan has been a consistent supporter of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and plays an active and constructive role in advancing the goal of a world free from chemical weapons.

The theme of my statement is “Multilateral Cooperation for Security – the example of the Chemical Weapons Convention”. Recognising the value and importance of multilateralism is not a matter of ideological preference. It is a necessity in our globalised and interdependent world which depends on sustainable progress for adherence to shared norms and rules.

There is no alternative to multilateral cooperation in dealing with contemporary and future challenges. The framework for such collective endeavours is provided under the Charter of the United Nations. We all know that the founding of the United Nations and the principles of its Charter were an imperative emerging from one of the most devastating conflicts in human history. The singular objective of promoting global peace and security was accompanied by the recognition that limitation on arms and eliminating the most destructive ones was indispensable and a collective responsibility.

In the face of continuing crisis and conflicts; be those political, economic or financial, a negative outlook for the future might appear irresistible. Ignoring the otherwise great strides that have been made in virtually every sphere of human activity, the effectiveness of multilateralism is sometimes questioned. Such doubts can easily extend to the quest to find solutions to the crucial problems of weapons of mass destruction. Eliminating such weapons and preventing their proliferation fortunately enjoys an international consensus. However, progress may not always be viewed satisfactory against declared expectations. And this can lead to scepticism.

The case of chemical weapons should provide hope and encouragement to international efforts relating to weapons of mass destruction. Chemical weapons today stand totally banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention. And, multilateral cooperation manifest in the work of the OPCW ensures that the treaty functions effectively and to the benefit of each of its Members. What makes this project not only unique but quite

remarkable is the fact that of all the weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons have historically been used the most often.

There was a time when conventional wisdom regarded the problem of chemical weapons as essentially one belonging to the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War as the two superpowers of the time were also known to possess the largest stockpiles. The extensive use of chemical weapons by the former regime in Iraq illustrated in recent times a more sinister nature of the threat. In the mid nineties and before the Convention entered into force, terrorists used chemical weapons in Tokyo, exposing yet another type of danger from these weapons.

The CWC is the first multilateral treaty to comprehensively ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction on a non-discriminatory basis and under conditions of strict verification.

Unlike some other arms control regimes, the CWC does not create any exceptions to the rule that chemical weapons are prohibited for all countries. All States Parties who possess chemical weapons must destroy their stockpiles according to given deadlines.

As a multifaceted tool, the Convention's goals include complete disarmament, non-proliferation, promotion of international cooperation for peaceful application of chemistry and providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical weapons.

It is also the first disarmament treaty to establish an international organisation to implement the range of programmes that are based on the objectives I have just mentioned including the operation of a verification

regime. Here, it is distinct from the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) which does not have a verification component and no inter-governmental body for oversight.

The Organisation also provides to its States Parties a forum for consultation and cooperation and, when needed, facilitates clarification, co-operation and fact-finding that contribute to confidence-building amongst its Member States.

Destruction of chemical weapons being one of our core objectives, the Organisation has thus far verified the destruction of over 70% of the 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical weapons stockpiles that were declared by States Parties.

Three States declaring possession of chemical weapons have already completed the destruction of their entire stockpile. To date, all of the 70 declared Chemical Weapons Production Facilities have been inactivated, and over 90 percent of them have either been destroyed or permanently converted for peaceful purposes. These were facilities specifically built to produce chemical weapons. The Russian Federation and the United States of America as the two largest possessor States are making steady progress towards the complete destruction of their respective stockpiles. The destruction of chemical weapons is time consuming, labor intensive, dangerous and a very costly operation. Given the huge quantities of highly toxic chemicals that need to be destroyed safely, and in view of the complexity of the destruction activities, the two countries will miss the final deadline in April this year. In a decision that reflects both realism and a constructive spirit, the OPCW Conference of States Parties has taken last month a decision that will enable both countries to fulfil their

obligations while providing more transparency and increased reporting requirements.

With the potential of chemical warfare agents also being produced in commercial facilities, the Convention extends the reach of verification to the global chemical industry. This should be seen as a confidence building measure that does not in any way reflect a measure driven by suspicion. As a matter of fact, without the willing cooperation of the global chemical industry, the CWC would not be the success story that it is today.

The total number of facilities around the world considered relevant for the purposes of the Convention is in the range of 5,000. These are liable to be inspected and indeed those producing chemicals deemed to be of most relevance are regularly inspected by the Secretariat. So far, more than 2000 such inspections have been carried out in 80 countries.

Another tool for ensuring non-proliferation is the regime monitoring global exports and imports of chemicals covered by the Convention. In certain types of chemicals of greater concern, States Parties have to declare their transfers to the Technical Secretariat. Furthermore, such trade is either conditional or prohibited with States that are not parties to the Convention. Member States are required to carefully monitor such transfers and to report relevant information to the OPCW. To streamline procedures and to make this monitoring tool more effective, the Organisation works closely with the World Customs Organisation (WCO).

The CWC aims to both eliminate chemical weapons and to prevent their re-emergence. It is not intended at all to hamper the scientific, economic or technological development of its Parties. On the contrary, under its Article XI, the Convention provides for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for peaceful purposes. OPCW has for this purpose established a wide range of programmes. For instance, the OPCW trains chemists and engineers in industrial best practices to safely manage chemicals in a complex industrial environment.

There are additional programmes designed to enhance analytical skills in chemistry, for funding research projects and sponsoring internships for qualified people at reputed research institutions. These programmes beneficial to our States Parties in their own right serve also to reinforce support for the Convention amongst our membership; a majority of which are developing countries or those whose economies are in transition.

The same group of countries is also interested in enhancing their national capacity for protection against chemical weapons. Article X of the Convention embodies the right of all States Parties to seek assistance and protection against the threat of chemical weapons or if it actually becomes a victim of chemical attack. The provisions of this article envisage a coordination mechanism among Member States to mobilise the provision of emergency assistance to the country that might face an emergency situation and requires such international assistance.

The development of national preparedness and of mechanisms for emergency assistance in case of such an attack is an essential part of the security assurance that States receive by joining the Convention. The

Secretariat has been working extensively in collaboration with our States Parties with a view to ensuring effective emergency response capacity should a need ever arise.

Here I wish to commend Pakistan for organising an International Basic Course on Assistance and Protection against Chemical Weapons in Islamabad last October and I welcome its intention to host a regional centre of Assistance and Protection. These are examples of how our committed States Parties are contributing to the goals of the Convention and in the process confirming the validity of multilateral cooperation for promoting security. Here I would like to acknowledge the support extended by Pakistan to the OPCW work since the outset. Indeed the National Authority, other concerned bodies and the Permanent Mission in the Hague, as well as Pakistani nationals working in the OPCW Technical Secretariat, have made valuable contributions which I highly appreciate.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In April next year, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) will complete fifteen years of its operation. A transition awaits the OPCW which has already fulfilled a major part of one of its core responsibilities. The verified destruction of chemical weapons declared by States Parties is well on track. By the year 2016, only 1 percent of such weapons will remain to be destroyed. The Convention has brought significant benefits and advanced the objectives of international security.

We are now required to adjust our priorities to better meet the challenges of the future. Progress made in the destruction of chemical weapons is an

important but not the only factor that defines the transition for the Organisation. An Advisory Panel on future priorities of the OPCW that I had commissioned recommended several steps to ensure that the Organisation was able to respond to the challenges of a fast changing world. A debate on the future priorities of the OPCW will continue in the coming months.

Making the world free from chemical weapons and sustaining that status will remain an enduring task and one requiring constant attention and support. We have a number of challenges ahead of us.

In order to derive fully the security benefits that the Convention offers, it is crucial for all States Parties to have in place the administrative structures and the domestic legislation necessary to give legal effect to their obligations under the CWC.

A legal framework through legislation and the means to enforce it create the domestic capacity to monitor, to report, and to guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines. An effective domestic regime conveys a strong message to those who may harbour ill intent. An added benefit of establishing such laws and regulations, and domestic capabilities, is the ability to comply with other international obligations such as those established under United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). There are a significant number of our States Parties who have yet to adopt such measures. The Secretariat on its part remains committed to providing them all necessary assistance. A significant portion of our resources is in fact devoted to this objective. Voluntary financial support especially from the European Union remains crucial to our efforts.

Another important challenge that we face relates to the universality of the Convention. Our 188 members represent over 98% of the global population and also 98% of the world's chemical industry.

The rate of growth in our membership has been the fastest for any disarmament treaty. It is a symbol of the international community's firm support for the Convention.

However there still remain 8 countries that have not joined the Convention. OPCW policy making organs have stressed that universality is a priority. And, for good reason. The CWC aims to make our world totally free from chemical weapons. This can only be assured when each and every member of the international community joins the Convention. Without universality, we face a paradoxical situation in which there is the complete elimination of chemical weapons by those that have chosen to join the Convention, without the assurance that chemical weapons have been eliminated from the world.

Some of the remaining countries seek to justify their reluctance to join the Convention by reference to unresolved regional problems. These in my view are not convincing reasons. These regions, given the security situation, are better off without chemical weapons. Ambiguity in this connection can only lead to aggravation, not the resolution of regional disputes.

Three states that are not parties to the Convention are located in the sensitive region of the Middle East. A conference to consider the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle

East is expected to be held in Finland later this year. OPCW has been requested to contribute to this important initiative which we will, and, it is my hope that this effort will facilitate the objective of promoting universal adherence to the Convention.

The success of the CWC has been the result of multilateral negotiations that carefully considered the long term durability of the prohibitions that were established. Science was an important factor in shaping the verification regime of the Convention. But it was negotiated nearly two decades ago. During this period, developments in science and technology have been nothing short of transformational. An effective industry-verification regime, together with data monitoring, is the bedrock of the Convention's objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. It is a crucial confidence-building measure that will sustain the long-term viability of the Convention as an instrument of security against chemical weapons. The verification regime must keep pace with the growing number of chemical facilities and capabilities that did not exist at the time the Convention was negotiated. Together with refining our industry verification regime for better focus and intensity, we also need to initiate serious consideration of the impact of emerging technologies.

The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) comprises eminent experts, among them a distinguished scientist from Pakistan, Dr. Zafar-uz Zaman, and is tasked with the responsibility to keep developments in science and technology under review. At this juncture their work assumes much greater importance and I will do my best to make available to them the needed resources for their work.

In the context of international terrorism, it has rightly been affirmed that the OPCW is not an anti-terrorism organisation. At the same time, for an entity that exists to provide safeguards against the use of chemical weapons, the contemporary threat of terrorism places a distinct responsibility on the Organisation. We have an open ended working group on terrorism which was established in 2001. This is a forum for exchange of views among States Parties on the threat of chemical terrorism. It is true that the CWC did not include the issue of terrorism, but there is a common understanding that it can be addressed within the existing parameters of the Convention and the full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties will be an important contribution to counter-terrorism efforts by the International Community.

From a number of events and seminars that were held last year including a major international conference to commemorate the International Year of Chemistry, the expectations of States Parties emerge clearly in favour of a more pro-active OPCW role in matters of both assistance and protection as well as safety and security against chemical weapons and toxic chemicals. These expectations are rooted in the OPCW's singular role to abolish chemical weapons and to facilitate international cooperation in promoting its security goals, as well as opportunities for peaceful application of chemistry. These are interlinked objectives. They offer general benefits to States Parties and will contribute to making the overall regime strong and effective.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have presented to you a broad overview of both the accomplishments of the CWC and the challenges that lie ahead of us.

In a world that sometimes finds it difficult to agree on issues of international importance, the CWC's implementation and the OPCW have stood out as an example of the success of multilateralism. The credit obviously belongs to all our States Parties.

Fulfilling the mandate enshrined in the Convention was never going to be an easy task. Our Member States have shown remarkable goodwill and dedication in building a strong and vibrant multilateral Organisation. In this way, they have made an invaluable contribution not just to the practical functioning of the OPCW, but to the over-all confidence building process that is indispensable for the eventual success of the Convention.

I do believe that this offers a good example of nations working together for the common good. Difficult decisions require the contending parties to sacrifice a part of their preferred outcomes keeping in view the essence of the goal before them. The aspiration for a better world; a safer world can only be realised through a shared vision and a shared sense of responsibility.

Should the political will that makes the OPCW an example of success of multilateralism find its way to other international arenas, the result I am sure can be as hopeful for the international system particularly for peace and security.

Thank you for your attention.